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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000680

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR S/CT AND EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/11/2019
TAGS: OSCE PGOV TU
SUBJECT: TURKEY: INTERIOR MINISTER FINALLY UNVEILS NEW CT
DRAFT LAW

REF: A. 08ANKARA1939
1B. ANKARA191

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady, for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) Summary: Interior Minister Besir Atalay announced on May 11 the submission to the Speaker of Parliament of a long awaited draft law concerning the restructuring of Turkey's counterterrorism mechanism. In the press conference, Atalay foresaw the new undersecretariat as a small body governing intelligence and policy coordination. He specifically said that the undersecretariat would have no operational function and would not command the police, gendarmerie, or Coast Guard, but would work in connection with those bodies. Although the announcement signifies that the Turkish government is serious about a restructuring, the nature of the announcement suggests that it is still a body primarily intended to counter the PKK, with little attention paid to still active left-wing and Islamic radical terrorist groups. End Summary.

12. (U) In a press conference on May 11, Interior Minister Besir Atalay announced that the cabinet had submitted to the Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly a draft law detailing Turkey's counterterrorism undersecretariat. The details as announced by Atalay largely reflect what we had been hearing from officials for months: the body would be a small entity of no more than 100 people designed to coordinate intelligence among Turkey's security services and would serve as a consultative body to analyze and suggest security, economic, and social policies through the lens of counterterrorism. He made it clear that the body would have no operational role: the police, Jandarma, and Coast Guard, for instance, would not be attached to the new undersecretariat, but would send representatives to participate in the new body with counterparts from the military, intelligence service, ministries, and outside academics. Atalay also asserted that the High Council on Counterterrorism, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Cicek, would continue as a separate entity, but would work closely with the new undersecretariat.

13. (C) Ministry of Interior General Undersecretary Yilmaz Arslan told us in a meeting on May 7 that once Parliament Speaker Toptan received the draft law, he would submit it to committees where it would be debated and possibly amended

before being brought before Parliament's general assembly for a vote. He conceded that this could be a long process, but was hopeful that, given the government's current energy, the law could be passed before July. A number of government officials, including President Gul and representatives of the military, have been showcasing the need to resolve the Kurdish issue, and Atalay's announcement presented the proposed changes in that context.

¶4. COMMENT: Despite the fact that he did not mention the PKK, it was clear from Minister Atalay's announcement that the Interior Ministry leadership still views counterterrorism as largely a struggle against the PKK. In our working-level meetings with the Ministry of Interior, our interlocutors have always reassured us that the new structure would address terrorists of all stripes. The Minister may be focusing on the PKK out of political expediency, given that the PKK and the Kurdish issue continue to be the number one security threat in the eyes of the Turkish public. However, it is discouraging that even after a week full of raids and arrests involving a variety of groups including Islamic radicals and non-Kurdish leftists, the political leadership continues to couch counterterrorism almost exclusively from the point of view of fighting the PKK. Earlier discussion concerning the full subordination of the Jandarma into the MOI appears to have been abandoned.

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